

All Hands Call Aboard USS George Washington
Chief of Naval Operations
Admiral Gary Roughead
August 19, 2008

It really is a pleasure to be here and to talk to you and, if we have some time ... try and take a couple questions. It really is a double pleasure for me to be back on board George Washington. I had the pleasure of commanding this strike group and living aboard this ship and watching it do its thing in so many, many impressive ways so it's always great to be back with George Washington again.

But it's also a pleasure for me to be able to talk to you. You have done an absolutely incredible job. Because of a series of events this ship was tested and it was tested in an extreme way but you fought valiantly, effectively, you got the fire under control, put it out and then you went to San Diego and you want to work to get her ready to go to sea. Our ability to be able to fight like that to be able to come in, get ourselves fixed and get back out into the game is what it's all about and you epitomize that. You did a tremendous job and it's not just the crew. I am well aware -- because of things I've done in my career -- that our ability to get our warships back into the fight is because of the crew, but it's also a tremendous structure that stands behind us in the form of repair capability and capacity. That can come from our Navy resources, as it did here. It can also come from the civilian sector, the private sector as it did here. All of that works together to make us capable of being the foremost naval force in the world. There's no question about that.

Fifty five thousand man days were spent in getting GW ready to go back to sea, and you're ready to go. You're done. You're set to embark on what I consider to be something that's extremely important for this ship, for our Navy and for our country, because you are going forward into the Western Pacific. This is the first time that we have ever forward deployed a nuclear warship to Japan. We should never lose sight of the fact of the support of the government of Japan and what it took to work through the issues that allows George Washington to go and be part of the FDNF. The capability, the capacity, the power that you are going to be taking forward changes our options, changes our ability to provide the security and stability and ultimately the prosperity in that important part of the world. With that comes another added benefit. You are going to have an experience like few of your shipmates in the Navy have and that's to live and be part of that broader community in Japan. Several of us have spent some time there, have visited there and it is an experience that you and your families will never forget. My hat's off to you to be able to go do that.

In addition to the work that you are going to do in operating and taking George Washington's combat capability to sea, you are also part of the strategic interests of our nation. You are representatives. You've heard the term many, many times before as you've deployed, but now you really are the ambassadors of the United States Navy and the ambassadors of the United States when you are in Japan. Each and every one of you has that responsibility to represent our country, to interact with our hosts in Japan and to

be part of that community. I know the ship. I know the crew. You are going to do an absolutely superb job when you get there. And as I've said, the other aspect of it is that it is going to be the experience of a lifetime and one you will never forget. I congratulate you on the work you have done and what you are getting ready to do.

The reason I'm a little bit pressed on time is because I'm on the last leg of a trip that has taken me around the world in the last nine days. We started out in Norfolk about eight days ago, or not in Norfolk, but in Washington – slip of the tongue on places I would probably rather be than in Washington – but we started out and went to Bahrain and spent some time with 5th Fleet and our shipmates that are deployed in the Gulf. Then we had the opportunity to go into Iraq, spent two days in Iraq, also visiting with our shipmates who are doing some incredible work there in a variety of assignments and a variety of missions. We went on to Afghanistan where there, too, the Navy is well represented. We are doing things that quite frankly a few years ago we never would have envisioned. Sailors in those types of assignments but they're there and they're making a huge difference. The Abraham Lincoln is south of Afghanistan flying strikes in on a daily basis. I can tell you that the Army in Afghanistan loves the Abraham Lincoln because of the work that she's doing.

Throughout that time that I was out visiting, it really was an inspiration to me to see the work that your shipmates are doing, making a difference – 15,000 Sailors on the ground in the Middle East and every one is making a difference, every one is appreciated and respected for what we bring to the fight and it is important business. We then went on to Singapore and again, there too we saw the relationship that we have with a great partner and friend and the respect that they have for our Navy. Then, we were on to Hawaii and now here in San Diego to deal with some important issues for naval aviation as we look to the future.

Right now it's just great to be with you.

I thank you for what you did. I applaud you for what you did. I wish all the best to you and your families as you go forward into the Western Pacific, quite frankly to make history. I know that George Washington is going to continue to carry that proud tradition into the West.